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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

7 June 1957

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STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 32-57

SUBJECT: The Situation in Cuba

1. The Cuban situation was recently treated in NIE 80-57, "Political Stability in Central America and the Caribbean through 1958," 23 April 1957. At that time, the regime of military "strong men" Fulgencio Batista, who returned to power in the 1952 army coup, had been considerably weakened by growing unrest, largely political but, to some extent military, over the previous 18 months. The conclusion reached in the estimate was, "Inasmuch as we do not believe that the Cuban government can fully restore public order or check the emergence of new civilian opposition elements, there is only an even chance that the Batista regime will survive the period of this most estimate. A military-dominated junta would be the/probable successor."

\* This memorandum has been discussed with DD/P and OCI.

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2. Batista's position has been further weakened during the brief period since publication of NIE 80-57. His government has been confronted with signs of increasing civil resistance, continued terrorist activity, extensive sabotage of Havana's electric power system on 28 May, renewed fighting with Fidel Castro's rebel forces, and an additional small-scale landing of rebels, possibly sponsored by ex-President Prio. Rivalry between the pro-government labor confederation and disaffected leaders of the electric, telephone, and bank workers has introduced a new element of significant unrest. In addition to guerrilla activity and labor unrest, there is the usual opposition from political parties who are seeking a peaceful return to normal democratic processes by negotiation with the government parties. These negotiations -- concerned with reaching an agreement on elections next year -- have been only partly successful. They are being threatened by bickering and by the government's failure to permit a political amnesty and to shorten its term of office.

3. On the other hand, Batista's civilian opponents appear to lack army support while Batista apparently has the support of the army thus far. His opponents have not stimulated any great response from the public except in Oriente province, where a majority of the inhabitants are believed sympathetic to Castro's movement. The opposition seemingly

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is not yet sufficiently well organized or united to eliminate Batista except possibly by assassination, and agitation remains primarily a terrorist and guerrilla operation. While the Communists (numbering about 10-15,000) are making a clever and determined propaganda drive, there is no evidence that their efforts are metting with much success.

4. In the face of a probable continuation of serious unrest, it is likely that Batista will employ increasingly authoritarian measures; he may again resort to a suspension of constitutional guarantees. Although he will probably try to limit the use of such tactics, he is apparently determined to eliminate guerrilla activity by almost any means. He probably hopes that the government's current all-out campaign against the guerrillas will lead to a settlement of the over-all problem.

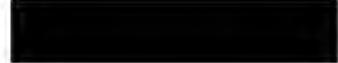
5. As long as Batista continues to command the loyalty of the army, he will probably be able to remain in power. The army is likely to support the president only so long as the majority of officers believe continued support of Batista will not place their own positions in jeopardy. So far there is no evidence that they have changed their attitude toward him. But there are some reports of disaffection among the ranks, plotting among the officers, some antagonism between junior and top echelon officers, and lower morale in recent months.

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Army leaders, as well as high government officials, are showing concern over the possibility that new revolutionary attempts are imminent. Thus Batista's future position vis-a-vis the army is uncertain at best; in the event of prolonged or intensified revolutionary unrest, it might become untenable.

6. There is still only an even chance that Batista will retain power through 1958, and a military-dominated junta remains the most likely successor if he does fail. At present, we do not believe that such a junta would adopt a very different attitude toward US interests than the current regime.

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- 4 -

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